

## **Cobb County Landscape Ordinance for County Facilities**

- ◆ Select plants that are regionally adapted to the average rainfall of the area. Ensure plants are planted appropriate to site characteristics: shade, proximity to building, slope of site, and size of planting area. Group plants with similar water needs together.
- ◆ When landscaping a new facility preserve established vegetation growing on a site; it has an extensive root system and requires less irrigation water than newly planted trees and shrubs. Group plants with similar water needs together. High water use plants should comprise no more than 30% of the site.
- ◆ Concentrate seasonal color in small, high impact areas to reduce overall water requirements.
- ◆ Use practical turf areas and turfgrass that are best adapted to Cobb County's climate. Plant selection and adaptation are the most important factors in planning, planting, and maintaining a landscape for water conservation. A properly selected grass species or cultivar is more likely to thrive and need fewer inputs (e.g. water, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.). Selection and adaptation include the influence of environmental factors as well as the ability of the turfgrass plant to withstand periodic dormancy.
- ◆ Modify the root zone. Improvement in either the chemical or physical characteristics of the soil can reduce turfgrass irrigation needs by enhancing infiltration of rainfall, increasing soil moisture retention and promoting deeper rooting to reduce water leaching beyond the root zone. Soil needs to be amended with organic materials as needed to encourage water retention and deep root penetration. Unamended clay soils do not allow for deep root growth and requires excess water and maintenance. This practice involves understanding Cobb County's soils. The water and nutrient holding capacity of soils are different. Clay soils of the Piedmont need to be modified or managed in order to increase water retention on the site, minimize run off, limit the need for fertilizer and encourage deep root growth.
- ◆ Base the irrigation system design on the site landscape design, water use zones, and water use of the matured landscape. An irrigation plan and irrigation system diagram should be left with the County when the job is finalized and approved.
- ◆ Upon completion of the irrigation system installation, conduct a field performance audit to determine distribution uniformity and precipitation rates for each zone. This field audit should be conducted by a certified landscape auditor with a current (CLIA) certification from the Irrigation Association. System efficiency rating of 75% or greater is required. The system should be adjusted to reach at least 75% efficiency.
- ◆ Perform a thorough irrigation system inspection annually. Every 3 years a full irrigation system audit by a certified irrigation auditor with a current (CLIA) from the Irrigation Association. At least a 75% irrigation system efficiency rating is required. The system

should be adjusted and repaired to reach the 75% efficiency rating if it fails to meet that efficiency.

- ◆ Prepare the planting bed properly by deep tilling to a depth of 8 to 12 inches. When planting individual plants, dig a wide planting hole to provide a favorable rooting environment. A large planting hole and deep tilling will allow roots to expand more easily and the plant will develop a strong root system, better able to sustain the plant during times of drought.
- ◆ Apply 3 to 5 inches of mulch on the soil surface after planting to conserve soil moisture and help maintain a uniform soil temperature, while preventing weeds that compete with plants for light, water, and nutrients. Fine-textured mulches prevent evaporative water loss better than coarse-textured mulches. For best water efficiency, mulch out to the drip line of plants (the outer edge of the leaves or branches) At least a 1-inch circumference bare area must be left around the base of the plant. Piling mulch against the trunk causes insect infestation and disease.
- ◆ Test soil to provide the best gauge for fertilization requirements of the landscape. Soil must be amended as indicated by the test to ensure plant health. A healthy landscape is more water efficient. Proper nutrition enables plants to better use available water and to conserve it during dry periods. Over-fertilization increases plant stress during times of drought.
- ◆ Scout the site and identify the problem weeds and insects.
- ◆ Develop an appropriate control program for the target, problem weeds and insects.